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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WSDA hosts Wenatchee forum on connecting local farms to school

OLYMPIA – A forum, “Farm-to-Cafeteria Connections: Supporting Regional Agriculture, Fighting Obesity, and Promoting Nutrition and Health in Central Washington” will be held Thursday, May 27, from noon to 5:30 p.m. at Wenatchee Valley College Campus Theater, 1300 Fifth Street, Wenatchee, WA.

The forum will discuss how schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and catering businesses can obtain fresh, high quality products from local farms, and be a part of the solution to national issues of nutrition and obesity. It is an opportunity for farms to learn more about marketing opportunities with schools and other institutions, and foster future business relationships. The Washington State Department of Agriculture’s (WSDA) Small Farm and Direct Marketing program, the Institute for Rural Innovation and Stewardship, and the Cascade Foothills Farmland Association are sponsoring the event. Cost is \$10 and includes lunch.

Speakers will talk about how Farm-to-Cafeteria projects are created, and showcase successful projects in Washington and other states. School administrators, food service and nutrition professionals, farmers, and community members will have the opportunity to network with others interested in creating local programs.

“Serving locally produced foods in schools, nursing homes, hospitals, and other venues increases marketing opportunities for Washington farms, supports the local economy and provides healthy, high quality foods for our communities,” said Kelli Sanger, WSDA direct marketing specialist. “Our experience has shown that when schools offer fresh, locally grown produce, students are eager to add them to their plate. A Farm-to-School program has been very successful in the Olympia school district. It is helping to prepare those students for a lifetime of healthy eating.”

Funding is provided by a grant from the USDA Risk Management Agency. For more information, contact Sanger at (360) 902-2057 or by e-mail, ksanger@agr.wa.gov. To register for the forum contact Janet Heath, Institute for Rural Innovation and Stewardship at (509) 682-6620.

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